



Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Member Organizations

**The Umbrella Center for
Domestic Violence Services**
Ansonia, CT

The Center for Family Justice
Bridgeport, CT

**The Center for Empowerment
and Education**
Danbury, CT

**Domestic Violence Program
United Services**
Dayville, CT

**Network Against Domestic
Abuse**
Enfield, CT

**Domestic Abuse Services
Greenwich YWCA**
Greenwich, CT

Interval House
Hartford, CT

**Chrysalis Domestic Violence
Services**
Meriden, CT

New Horizons
Middletown, CT

Prudence Crandall Center
New Britain, CT

**The Umbrella Center for
Domestic Violence Services**
New Haven, CT

Safe Futures
New London, CT

Domestic Violence Crisis Center
Norwalk, CT

Women's Support Services
Sharon, CT

Domestic Violence Crisis Center
Stamford, CT

Susan B. Anthony Project
Torrington, CT

Safe Haven
Waterbury, CT

**Domestic Violence Program
United Services**
Willimantic, CT

Testimony Regarding

SB 123, An Act Expanding Eligibility for the Address Confidentiality Program

HB 5154, An Act Requiring the Provision of Information Concerning Children's Mental Health and Domestic Violence by Police Officers

**Children's Committee
February 22, 2022**

Good afternoon Senators Anwar and Kelly, Representatives Linehan and Dauphinais, and members of the committee. CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) is the state's leading voice for victims of domestic violence and those who serve them. Our members provide essential services to nearly 40,000 victims of domestic violence each year. Services provided include 24-hour crisis response, emergency shelter, housing advocacy and resources, safety planning, counseling, support groups and court advocacy.

Senate Bill 123

Senate Bill 123 seeks to expand the state's existing Address Confidentiality Program (ACP) to include victims of kidnapping, human trafficking, and individuals who have filed or had a petition filed on their behalf for the termination of parental rights that was granted. Currently the ACP lists as types of eligible victimization – family violence, injury or risk of injury to a minor, sexual assault, and stalking. For these victims, the program allows them, upon successful completion of an application with an application assistant, to use a PO Box provided by the Secretary of the State's Office as their public mailing address. All mail is then forwarded by the Secretary of the State's Office to the victim's undisclosed address.

CCADV has no concerns with expanding the program to additional individuals who need to keep their location confidential for safety reasons. We do want to point out that the program application does require an "application assistant" to complete the application on behalf of an applicant. CGS § 54-240b states that "Each application for program participation shall be completed with the assistance of an application assistant," and, "The Secretary of the State shall make available a list of entities that employ application assistants to assist applicants in applying for participation in the address confidentiality program..." Because the ACP is currently limited to types of victimization that fall within domestic and sexual violence, the only application assistants listed on the Secretary of the State's website are members of CCADV and the CT Alliance to End Sexual Violence (<https://portal.ct.gov/SOTS/Business-Services/ACP/Address-Confidentiality-Program#listofentitiesthatemploy>).

The application does require that the application assistant attest to the victimization that the applicant has experienced. It may not be possible for CCADV's 18 member organizations to attest to some of the proposed new types of victimization if that applicant is not also a victim of domestic violence. Certainly our members work with human trafficking victims, but there are also organizations such as Love 146 and CT Institute for Refugees and Immigrants that do the majority of work with trafficking victims. For victims of kidnapping and those individuals who have had a parent have their parental rights terminated, they may be victims of domestic violence and receiving services at CCADV's 18 member organizations, but they may not. In those instances when an applicant is not receiving services from our member organizations, our advocates would not be able to act as an application assistant and attest to that individual's victimization.

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Therefore, we support expansion of the ACP, but ask that the Secretary of the State's Office have a plan for the entities it will list as application assistants for these other types of victimization.

HB 5154

HB 5154 calls for law enforcement to have available and distribute as necessary 1) behavioral and mental health evaluation and treatment resources available for children developed pursuant to section 17a-22r and 2) services and resources available to victims of domestic violence published pursuant to section 10-10g. CCADV and the Judicial Branch, Office of Victim Services (OVS) worked with the Children's Committee to develop CGS § 10-10g in 2019. We have no problem with the proposed changes contained in HB 5154, but do want to highlight two existing statutes that address the provision of information about domestic violence services by law enforcement.

First is CGS § 46b-38b subsection (f), specifically numbers 3 and 4, which states:

(f) It shall be the responsibility of the peace officer at the scene of a family violence incident to provide immediate assistance to the victim. Such assistance shall include, but need not be limited to: (1) Assisting the victim to obtain medical treatment if such treatment is required; (2) notifying the victim of the right to file an affidavit for a warrant for arrest; (3) informing the victim of services available, including providing the victim with contact information for a regional family violence organization that employs, or provides referrals to, counselors who are trained in providing trauma-informed care; (4) referring the victim to the Office of Victim Services; and (5) providing assistance in accordance with the uniform protocols for treating victims of family violence whose immigration status is questionable, established pursuant to subsection (i) of this section.

CGS § 46b-38b also references the statewide model law enforcement policy on family violence, which reiterates that law enforcement must distribute this information at the scene. For this, CCADV provides tear-off pads free-of-charge to each of the approximately 121 law enforcement agencies in Connecticut, including municipal, state, tribal and university police departments. Each tear-off pad includes 25 "safety planning sheets" that provide basic safety planning information as well as the contact information for the statewide domestic violence hotline, Safe Connect. Approximately 7,000 pads in English and Spanish are distributed annually.

Finally, we also want to point out CGS § 54-203 which outlines the powers and duties of the Judicial Branch, Office of Victim Services. Subsection (b) of this statute states that OVS shall have the power and duty to:

(1) To direct each hospital, whether public or private, each university or college health services center, whether public or private, and each community health center, as defined in section 19a-490a, to prominently display posters in a conspicuous location giving notice of the availability of compensation and assistance to victims of crime or their dependents pursuant to sections 54-201 to 54-218, inclusive, and to direct every law enforcement agency of the state to inform victims of crime or their dependents of their rights pursuant to sections 54-201 to 54-218, inclusive;

For this, OVS also distributes tear-off pads to law enforcement agencies across the state with information about victim rights and contact information for a number of victim services including domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse. It is our understanding that these pads are available in English, Spanish, Portuguese and Polish.

Thank you for your consideration.

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